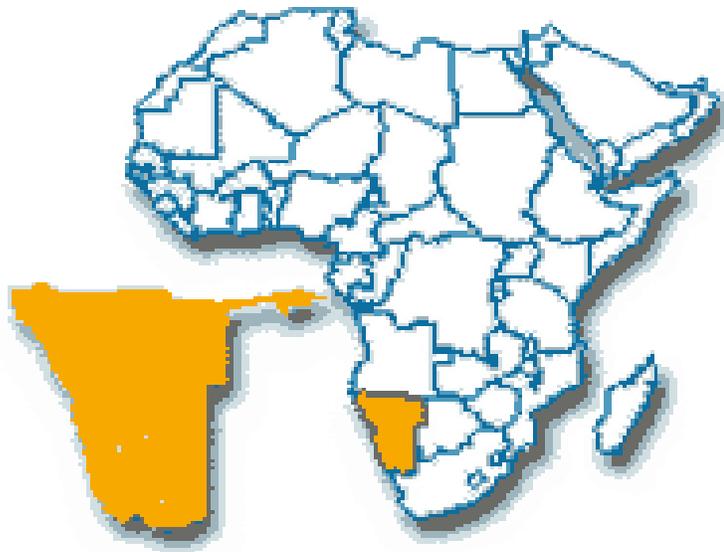




AFRICAN WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT POLICY ROUNDTABLE



**Development of a Namibian Centre
for Innovation, Entrepreneurship
and Technology**



Preface

The Africa-America Institute (AAI) convened a meeting of representatives from foundations, corporations, non-governmental and multilateral organizations on March 17, 2003 for a discussion of the Namibian National Centre for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Technology (CIET). The meeting took place under the auspices of AAI's USAID-supported AFTECH (African Technology for Education and Workforce Development) initiative. The centre is one of several initiatives inaugurated by the Ministry of Higher Education, Training, and Employment Creation to reduce poverty and unemployment in Namibia and to improve its economy. The purpose of the meeting was for the Ministry to receive advice and feedback from foundation and business leaders and others involved in international workforce development efforts.



SUMMARY

The Republic of Namibia is, in the words of Nahas Angula, Minister of Higher Education, Training, and Employment Creation, “a ‘big,’ small country” – possessing a large land mass (800,000sq km) but a relatively small population (1.9 million). In the 13 years since it gained its independence, Namibia has focused its efforts on establishing democratic systems to allow citizens participatory roles in their country’s future and reconciliation efforts. Having achieved this measure of success, the government is now addressing a new set of challenges. Namibia has identified three key challenges impacting its future growth initiatives:

- Poverty (absolute and relative)
- Unemployment
- HIV/AIDS

Namibia’s economy is largely dependent on extractive minerals – including diamonds, lead, zinc, tin, silver, and tungsten. Additionally, it possesses a long (2,000 miles) coastline that has made fishing a viable economic sector. Hake, monkfish, horse mackerel, pilchard, anchovy, and rock lobster are among the products sent abroad for processing. Livestock farming, exported on the hoof, is another sector of Namibia’s national economy. Nearly half (48 percent) of Namibia’s population works in the agriculture sector; accounting for a mere 12 percent of the country’s GDP.

Although rich in natural resources and exportable raw agricultural products, Namibia lacks the capacity for domestic value-added production of its agricultural commodities and natural resources. Moreover, Namibia suffers from a severely skewed distribution of wealth. Namibia’s GNP of \$2,000 per capita places it in the “mid-income” country classification; however 55 percent of the population has a personal GDP of \$145 per year. The gap between the small, wealthy urban and large, rural poor populations is among the widest in the world.



The government's Second National Development Program (NDPII) focuses on sustainable and equitable development -- the creation of a common economy in which all citizens share in the creation of new wealth. In analyzing its status as a "rich country of poor people," Namibia has recognized the need to add value to its natural resources to move its people from poverty.

The goal of transforming an agrarian society, which lacks technical know-how to one prepared to take its place in the global marketplace has led to the creation of the **National Centre for Innovation, Entrepreneurship and Technology** (CIET). The Centre will serve as the centerpiece of workforce development policy for the country. Knowledge-based strategies will be used to stimulate the development of a value-chain and to strengthen the links between education and industry.

Based on the findings of a five-month feasibility study commissioned from the Norwegian National Institute of Technology, and with an initial government investment of \$1million, the Centre will focus on product incubation, market research, and technology development to move Namibia from raw material production to value-added production.

Under Minister Angula's leadership, the Ministry conducted a national assessment to determine which sectors of Namibia's economy possess global competitive potential. It plans to target these sectors—among which agriculture will be given the highest priority—through a set of strategies designed to strengthen human capacity development and knowledge management. Along these lines, the work of the CIET will inform and shape the direction of a national education and training system capable of producing Namibian workers with marketable skills.

Target sectors identified as among the most promising for value-added production include:

- Agriculture and Food Processing
- Marine Resources and Products



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- Minerals
- Energy, Environment, and Waste Management
- Chemistry and Pharmacy
- Electro, Electronics, Automation, and Electro-Mechanics
- ICT-Software Development and Web-Design

Agriculture has been identified as the highest priority sector as it provides wealth creation opportunities for significant portions of the population. Successful organization of the small community farmers and development of stable markets for their products will result in poverty reduction in large population groups. The Centre has started its efforts with traditional products, such as millet. Using contacts suggested by the World Food Organization, the Centre has linked with South African food technology knowledge networks resulting in a semi-commercial product for export to neighboring countries.

The Centre will assist small and mid-sized enterprises, as well as small farmers and herders enhance production techniques and substantially improve capacity for products attractive to domestic and international markets. Such assistance will additionally enable the government to reduce its dependence on imported goods. Namibia currently spends US\$ 1 million annually to import eggs. Vegetables must also be imported. The CIET initiative has the potential to transform Namibia's economy and society and improve the quality of many lives.

The Centre will be headquartered in the Tsumeb region offering both easy access the large population groups, as well as important VAP growth potential. Local CIET branches are planned for Oshakati, Rundu, Windhoek, and Keetmanshoop.

The Namibian Ministry of Higher Education, Training and Employment Creation (MHETEC) and the Africa-America Institute (AAI) have formed a partnership to address the human resources development needs of the CIET. The partnership will also seek out other academic partners in the U.S., Namibia and other African countries. The participation of agricultural boards and private and non-profit organizations involved in agricultural marketing will also be solicited.



DISCUSSION

Minister Angula: I want to thank all of you for your interest in the Center. What I am asking this group for is assistance in four areas: Identification of organizations we can collaborate with that share mission and have links to knowledge networks; Sourcing initial management expertise to “kick start” the Centre; Identifying core technical human resources in critical areas (i.e., polishing diamonds, etc.); Sourcing financial support to match with governmental funds already allocated.

Mora McLean, President, The Africa-America Institute: Tell us about the status of the CIET – has it moved beyond the conceptual stage?

Minister Angula: We are currently in the planning phase. Through our work with the National Institute of Technology in Norway we are learning from the experience of other countries. The Centre is now moving into the design and implementation stage. Meetings like this one will help us to identify priority projects and the resources needed to carry them out.

Alexandra Draxler, Senior Programme Specialist, International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO: Why has there been no mention of HIV/AIDS challenge in relation to the Centre? Perhaps you should be looking into workplace initiatives that could be implemented?

Minister Angula: There is a taskforce that is working on a system-wide process for tackling HIV/AIDS. Specifically it is looking at creating support systems for child-led households. The creation of fortified foods, like fortified millet, will help HIV/AIDS orphans.

Ms. Draxler: Have you given any thought to how the Centre will include the full participation of women?

Minister Angula: This is a priority. I can report that 50 percent of the technology trainees are women and all of the millet researchers are women.



Ms. Draxler: How will the Centre push policies that reward entrepreneurs?

Minister Angula: The Centre will create the infrastructure that entrepreneurs need and demonstrate support for risk-takers.

Natalie D. Hahn, Senior Private Sector Advisor, UN Fund for International Partnership: I'd like to make some suggestions for organizations that could be collaborators with the Centre:

- **CGIR** – an international agricultural research group that does work with vegetable production. Additionally, they provide fellowships to women in Ethiopia and Nigeria
- **International Trade Center** – ITC is a technical cooperation organization whose mission is to support developing and transition economies, and particularly their business sectors, in their efforts to realize their full potential for developing exports and improving import operations with the ultimate goal of achieving sustainable development.
Contact: Dr. J. Denis Bélisle, Executive Director.
Web site: www.intracen.org
- **USAID Global Development Alliance** – matches funds raised through **public-private sector** alliances that address critical development needs. Minimum grant level is \$100,000. Web site: www.usaid.gov/gda/
- **Corporate Council on Africa** - leading American nonprofit dedicated to enhancing trade and investment ties between the U.S. and Africa.
Contact: Stephen Hayes, President.
Web site: <http://www.africacncl.org>
- **Cisco Networking Academies** – over 10,000 Networking Academies have been established in 149 countries to provide Internet technology skills essential for participation in global economy.
Web site: <http://cisco.netacad.net/public/academy>



Ms. Hahn further suggested creating a consortium of private sector companies – both multi-national and regional – that could help with financial support as well as access to human resource talents.

J.Y. Kyazze, representative to the United Nations, UNESCO: Will the Centre be open to just Namibians or will other countries have access; could it be viewed as an African Center versus a National Center?

Minister Angula: We are creating a centre of knowledge ... knowledge has no borders. We are eager to create networks and work with people anywhere. Others will be able to use the solutions that are created through the Centre. The Centre will be Namibian-centered, but will be beneficial to other African countries.

Kiki Edozie, Deputy Director, Institute of African Studies, Columbia University: Will the Centre involve NePAD (New Plan for Africa's Development) and SADC (South African Development Community) with the innovative policy development?

Minister Angula: NePAD remains political rhetoric, when it moves to a concrete thing, perhaps it will be involved. We must build a relationship with SADC and tap into their capacity. The only way to fight poverty is to create wealth. We are trying to interest major funding groups to assist with research study to identify Namibia's competitive advantage areas. This study would be done through the World Bank, which has not only the expertise in such studies, but caché with other groups. Knowledge is the key to poverty eradication. Previously the World Bank espoused the theory that education efforts should be directed at primary education. Now they admit that education efforts should target all levels of education.

Gerard Barry, Senior Fellow, Director of Research, Production and Technical Cooperation, Monsanto Company: Perhaps NePAD could serve the function of compiling information on specific initiatives, such as CIET, that are concrete examples of home-grown development activities. Secondly, in looking at the impact of HIV/AIDS, the Centre could provide training for women and orphan children to be



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small-scale entrepreneurs as heads of households as suggested by Oxfam and Save the Children. As you move forward with millet production, consider its cyclical nature and identify another product that would fill-in during off-season.

Minister Angula: I think that would be a good constructive role for NePAD to play. On the second matter, I will be traveling to Michigan State University following this meeting to tour their bio-technology incubator and meet with key personnel. I will also be visiting the Center of International Business Education and Research (CIBER). AAI has assisted in making these introductions that are providing an additional resource for us. It is important that we back up the infrastructure we are creating with a knowledge base. Ideas must be backed up with concrete solutions.

Mora McLean: The Ford Foundation had raised a question about the relationship between the Centre and other educational institutions within Namibia, such as the University of Namibia. Could you describe the relationships with other organizations?

Minister Angula: These training organizations have a distinct mission that is different from the Centre's. The Centre's mission is market research and development efforts and its approach is vocational in nature, providing hands-on problem solving whereas universities are designed to promote broad knowledge



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CIET OBJECTIVES

- Forge closer links and cooperation between education and industry;
- Enhance the pace of innovation and the establishment of new enterprises;
- Enhance the national capacity for knowledge management and technology brokerage;
- Increase national value-added production (VAP);
- Improve productivity and profitability in established enterprises;
- Strengthen the national economy and balance of payment;
- Reduce the economic and social disparities between Namibians.



Also Available through AAI:

- **Are African Workers Prepared to Compete in the Global Economy?** – Symposium of the African Technology for Education and Workforce Development Institute
- **Is Africa Important to the United States?** – Perspectives from the Bush Administration.



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